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ABSTRACT

Examining why the United States is one of the few advanced democratic market societies that do not offer child care as a universal public benefit or entitlement, this book is a comprehensive history of child care policy and practices in the United States from the colonial period to the present. The book shows why the current child care system evolved as it did and places its history within a broad comparative context. Drawing on a full range of archival material, the book shows how U.S. child care policy was shaped by changing theories of child development and early childhood education, attitudes toward maternal employment, and conceptions of the proper roles of minority women. The book further argues that current policy--erratic, inadequate, and stigmatized--is typical of the American way of "doing welfare." Following an introduction on child care and social citizenship for women, the book's chapters are as follows: (1) "The Multiple Origins of American Child Care"; (2) "The Road Not Taken: A Turning Point in Policies toward Wage-Earning Mothers"; (3) "Studied Neglect: Federal Inaction in the 1920s"; (4) "Uncle Sam's Cradles: New Deal and Wartime Policies"; (5) "Should Mothers Work? Prescriptions and Practices in the Postwar Era"; (6) "Making an Issue of Child Care"; and (7) "A Divided Constituency," on competing social attitudes toward out-of-home care. The book's epilogue explores American child care policy in comparison to that of European countries. Four appendices include a list of attendees at the 1941 Conference on Day Care of Children of Working Mothers and a list of 17 ways in which business can become involved in child care. (Contains extensive notes, by chapter.) (HTH)

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